



# MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE  
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **TENNESSEE AWARDED \$800,000 TO FURTHER FOOD STAMP OUTREACH** *FEDERAL FUNDS TO TARGET SHELBY AND DAVIDSON COUNTIES*

NASHVILLE, Tenn. — The Tennessee Department of Human Services has been awarded an \$800,000 grant to increase access to the Food Stamp program for low-income households. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently announced that six states—Tennessee, Arizona, Maryland, Minnesota, Michigan and New York—would benefit from the \$5 million Food Stamp Participation grants.

The federal grant will allow DHS to launch pilot projects in Shelby and Davidson Counties in January 2006. Target communities include the elderly, working parents and pregnant women. Employing a “roving caseworker model,” DHS caseworkers will travel to potential recipients’ homes or places of work. They will also work non-traditional hours and be available to meet clients at community events. This approach will help combat the barriers that many people experience in applying for benefits.

“The Food Stamp Program is critical in providing needed nutritional assistance to so many working-poor families in Tennessee,” said DHS Commissioner Gina Lodge. “This grant will enable our staff to reach out to families who might not think they are eligible, or who cannot come to our county offices during regular office hours. We are so pleased that the USDA has recognized our efforts at reaching out in non-traditional ways to increasing participation in this program.”

Davidson and Shelby Counties were selected because of the large number of families potentially eligible for the Food Stamp Program. It is estimated that 30 percent of Tennessee households eligible are not participating in the program.

Food Stamp Program benefits are 100 percent federally funded through the USDA and administered by the Department of Human Services. The program provides nutritional assistance benefits to low-income children and families.

More than \$78.5 million in Food Stamp benefits were issued in Tennessee last month. There are currently 374,000 households enrolled in the program in Tennessee, including 73,000 in Shelby County and nearly 36,000 in Davidson County.

For more information on the Food Stamp program and to view a county by county breakdown of Food Stamp participation and issuance, visit the Department of Human Services website at:

<http://www.state.tn.us/humanserv/fs-participation.htm>

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